

"Shepherds Need to know the Biblical meaning of _____" series
Introductory Comments

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www.setapartmingb.org general website

www.plantandgrowmessianicfellowships.org Leadership site under development

In this series, we will discuss the things learned through the application of ancient Hebrew pictographic understandings of Scripture and how they impact the shepherd/leaders of today.

As I have been writing these word studies, it has become clearer than ever that the application of these concepts will not come quickly or easily for many in leadership. Rather than being able to present these things as "blanket" recommendations across the board for anyone involved in a Messianic fellowship--or a home fellowship of any kind--it is most certain that application of this information will depend on the type of community and organization already in place. Any effort to "impose" leadership in a group that has not agreed to it or accepted that person's leadership role will lead to conflict and possible fragmentation. On the other hand, failing to exercise appropriate YHWH honoring authority will generally also lead to damage in the community.

We address this issue in our third foundational teaching, "The Importance of *Echad* in Messianic Communities." In an effort to better define such communities we have established a continuum of four levels, all the way from a group that gathers irregularly to study together to one that has chosen an interdependent daily lifestyle among Torah pursuant believers. Those who are together on a more casual or social basis are more like a group of independent people who choose to be together sometimes. The closer a group is to the casual end of the continuum the less likely it is to be able to apply these shepherding principles. Conversely, the closer a community has grown toward a committed, covenantal group, the more necessary and appropriate these concepts will become. This group could be described as more "interdependent" as they grow together in word and deed. We see that it is only possible to participate in the sanctification struggle while in community; moving toward *echad* with YHWH through Yeshua and with one another.

Finding clarity about who it is that has such a position of authority and responsibility, whether it is called being in leadership, pastoring or shepherding in a community is a subject in itself as well. We value/recommend Divine direction over human election. The maturity and preparation (or lack of it) for a leader to lead well

is also a factor. We maintain that a Torah pursuant community cannot develop in YHWH pleasing ways if there isn't a form of elder leadership, preferably plural leadership. This subject is addressed initially in our series "Where are the Men? (And is that the best question?)." If it isn't possible for leader/shepherds to speak into their people's lives and for them to receive concerns, the necessary "iron sharpening iron" will not be found; and shepherd/leaders need to be accountable to their people as well. A word study on the Biblical understanding of this phrase will also be available in this series. All involved need to approach difficult situations with a teachable heart and prayer for the presence of the *Ruach's* leading in the process and in the outcome.

This series will be most applicable for those leaders and communities that have chosen to grow together in interdependent ways as they pursue Messiah; the Living and the Written Torah. This subject is expanded a bit in the article: "Fellowship vs. "Social-ship": Do you know the difference?" The reader will also find our definition of Messianic Community in our PowerPoint presentation "The Importance of *Echad* in Messianic Communities."

As discussed in the first article ("Shepherds need to know the Biblical meaning of Stubbornness") we recognize that there are several major errors that can be made when leading a body of Believers. The two most common "equal and opposite" errors seem to be moving in too quickly without adequate discernment about what the people need or failing to take action decisively in a timely manner.

Although they may fight back and object, most "sheople" do need leadership and guidance in order to walk in a YHWH pleasing way. There are many reasons for apprehension about allowing leaders to speak into their lives which we address in various articles on our website. A very brief summary would include recognition that some people have a personal history of abuse or betrayal that has not yet been resolved and others have had experiences of abuse or betrayal at the hands of other shepherd/leaders of their faith communities. Wounded baby birds bite, and so do wounded people! It is a major challenge to the heart and spirit of a shepherd/leader/pastor to respond rather than react when this happens.

It is also true that many pressed into a leadership role remain reluctant to function well in it; perhaps fearing too much controversy or the heart-felt desire that everyone should "just get along." All believers are not able to sustain faith and application equally. Some need ongoing encouragement and feeding from those who CAN draw directly from YHWH through the Word, His Son and *Ruach*/Holy Spirit. They, too, fare better with encouragement and prayerful support. It is not the same thing to be a gifted teacher as it is to shepherd people. Attention to personal giftings and empowerment is always prayerfully necessary.

Having provided these few thoughts in advance, please keep them in mind as you consider the concepts covered in these Word studies, the state or stage of your community, and the clarity of roles.